

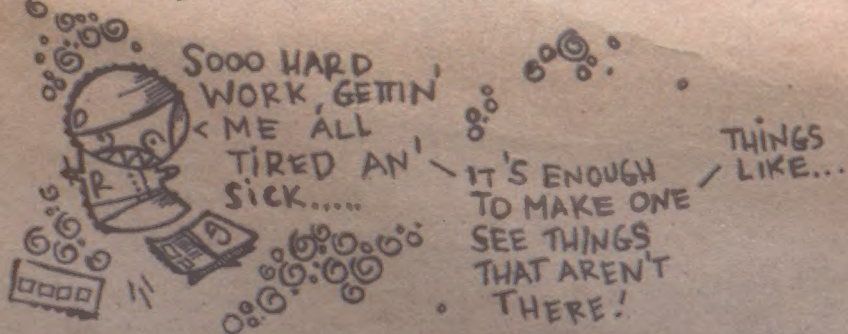
OUR VOICE

Jan/2003

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THE SUPER DISCOVERY

BY RAYMOND BIESINGER



FULL COLOUR!

BUT IT'S REALLY REAL!



AND SO, AFTER DRAWING IN EVERY OUR VOICE SINCE FEBRUARY, THE AUTHOR HAS REALIZED THAT HIS COMICS CAN BE FULL COLOUR! ENTER THE NEW ERA!

CROSS BOX

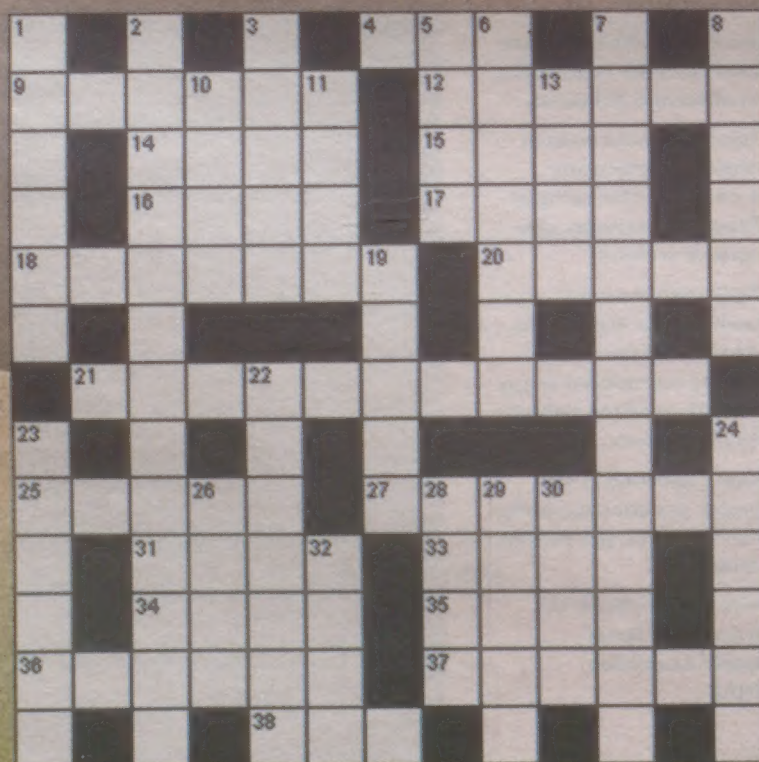
Across

4. Epoch
9. More chilly
12. Entangle
14. Roof overhang
15. Famous English school
16. Corner of a church for response leaders
17. Female name
18. Mother and father
20. Bird homes
21. Unavoidable
25. Muscular tissue
27. Strong upward air current
31. Bishops' jurisdictions
33. Cut of meat
34. Ammunition
35. Grapefruit/tangerine cross
36. Alleviation of pain
37. Blurs
38. Pop

Down

1. Take or receive
2. Sale to reduce inventory (9,4)
3. Number of stars in Ursa Major
5. Coral ridge
6. Aerial
7. PA resident
8. Bird
10. Matron
11. Lease
13. Extra
19. In complete confusion
22. Intrigued
23. Exertion
24. Emphasis
26. Semitrailer
28. As well as
29. Prescribed doctrine
30. Irritate
32. Settee

(Solution Pg. 12)



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JAN 2003
VOL. 1 NO. 9

Our Voice invites your contributions and input.

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Photo: Pieter de Vos

What's Up Chief?

CTLA demands answers from Chief of Police

On December 18th, Ravi Prithipaul, President of the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association (CTLA), brought the CTLA's concern with recent allegations of a "strategy by certain Edmonton lawyers to bog down" the EPS Internal Affairs system to the Edmonton Police Commission's public meeting. The allegations, as reported in November's Our Voice, came from Detective Peter Pick, an EPS Internal Affairs officer and Annette Bidniak, an EPS spokesperson. Both Pick and Bidniak claim that certain, as yet un-named, lawyers have been involved in filing frivolous complaints on behalf of clients against EPS officers. This, in turn, according to Pick and Bidniak, lengthens the time it takes the department to investigate legitimate complaints.

During the meeting, Chief Bob Wasylyshen presented EPS Superintendent Logar's report to the Commission regarding the article in which the allegations of Pick and Bidniak were made public. Logar's report, prepared at the request of the Chief, confirmed that both Pick and Bidniak had been quoted accurately in the article, but that their comments had been taken out of context and went on to state that Bidniak felt the article "gave her comments an additional tenor that was not properly reflective of the entire conversation." Calling the article "flawed" the report failed to either elab-

orate on how exactly Bidniak or Pick had been misrepresented or to point out where the flaws in reporting were evidenced.

Superintendent Logar, in a phone conversation with Our Voice on December 23rd, was unwilling to offer any insight into those questions. In spite of what Logar describes in the report as a "careful debriefing" with both Pick and Bidniak, he said, "I don't want to speak for Annette," and further, "I'm not going to try to remember a conversation that took place in November." He also stated that he did not feel there was "any need to elaborate." And that the Chief of Police was satisfied that the report was sufficiently thorough.

The CTLA, however, remains less than satisfied. CTLA President Ravi Prithipaul, during the question period following the Police Commission meeting, stated that the CTLA was unaware of any frivolous complaints and demanded the Chief of Police provide the CTLA with information about the specific files that Pick and Bidniak were referring to, including the names of the lawyers and the names of the clients. Chief Wasylyshen responded that he would take the request under consideration and provide the CTLA with a response as soon as possible. Wasylyshen expressed his desire to move on from this topic, but Prithipaul said that would not be possible until the CTLA got the information it was looking for.

After the meeting, Prithipaul provided the Chief with a written request for the information. As of December 23, 2002, Wasylyshen's office has confirmed the receipt of that request, but is unable to determine when the response will be forthcoming.

Natasha Laurence

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My Kingdom for a House

A Ten-year-old Challenges the Alberta Government on the Lack of Affordable Housing



In August 2002, Our Voice photographer Pieter de Vos visited the home of Michelle Peter and her children. Michelle had kindly agreed to be the subject of one of the postcards planned for the Our Voice/Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness campaign to address the lack of affordable housing in Alberta.

Michelle was at home with her youngest child, Dakota, who was six months old at the time. While Pieter was setting up, trying to find the best light and background for the photos, Michelle's 10 year old daughter, Veronica, came in from outside, where she had been playing with friends. The rest is history. Veronica posed with her mom and baby brother, and became an image on a card that was successfully distributed across the province.

But more than that, she took part in the distribution of the postcards and, as the time drew near for the signed cards to be presented to the Minister responsible for Housing, Stan Woloshyn, Veronica worked with her mentor to write a speech for the occasion -

the November 22nd National Day of Housing and Homelessness.

The day came, but Stan Woloshyn didn't. Veronica read her speech, but missed her chance to talk to the Minister.

Fortunately, it's not too late. The postcards are continuing to arrive at the offices of Our Voice, so in mid-December we placed, a formal request for a meeting, on Veronica's behalf with Stan Woloshyn's office, hoping that perhaps, if he could not come to her, she could go to him. The message, as written on the cards, is still the same. Lack of affordable housing is forcing many low-income and special needs people out of the rental market into homelessness. Alberta has cut more than \$200 million from housing since 1993. The Alberta government agreed in June to take Federal money, but has carefully avoided contributing any new Provincial money. Maybe it's time for the Honorable Minister to meet at least one of the people most impacted by this situation.

HOUSING **H**

In the planning and designing of new communities, **housing** projects, and urban renewal, the planners both public and private, need to give explicit consideration to the kind of world that is being created for the children who will be growing up in these settings. Particular attention should be given to the opportunities which the environment presents or precludes for involvement of children with persons both older and younger than themselves.

URIE BRONFENBRENNER

THE OFFICIAL BRUSH-OFF:

December 18, 2002

Dear Veronica:

The Honorable Ralph Klein, Premier, has sent me a copy of your recent letter on affordable housing for a response.

In June 2002, the provincial government signed an Affordable Housing Program Agreement with the federal government. This agreement brings more than \$67 million in federal funding to Alberta over the next four years. This funding will help to ensure that low-income families have access to affordable housing. My department is working on the details of delivering this program and we hope to have it in place within the next few months.

You mention that there is no heat in your living room. You may be able to receive assistance to fix your heating through the federal government's Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). If you would like more information on this program, please contact:

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
Standard Life Centre
Suite 210, 10405 Jasper Avenue NE
Edmonton, AB T5J #n\$

Thank you for writing the Premier on this important issue.

Yours truly,
Stan Woloshyn

November 8, 2002

Dear Miss Peter:

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your recent note that you read at the National Housing Action Day Vigil.

I am always please to hear from our younger citizens on matters that interest them. I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of your comments to the Honorable Stan Woloshyn, Minister of Seniors, Responsible for Housing, for his information as well.

Thank you for taking the time to write. Wishing you all the best.

Sincerely yours,
Ralph Klein

Hello My name is Veronica
I just want to say that I wish
houses were more affordable for
people with less money.
In my house In the Down stairs
living room the Heat does not
work and my mom and baby
Brother are sick so if you could
put some money in to houses
it would make the world
a better place

by Veronica
Peter
Age 10

Dear Ralph Klein
Thank-you for reading my
Speech it means a lot to me.
I don't know why people have
to suffer on the street and die
because we don't put enough
money into making Low cost
housing. So if you think about it
please, please remember those
people that live on the street
and have to eat garbage
and I think that is wrong!
So please do something more
about this!!

Veronica Peter
Sacred Heart School
Age 10

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



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> Edmonton, AB
> T5H 2H6
> Email: nlaurence@bissellcentre.org
> Fax: (780) 429-7008

Fed Up with the Feds

L LETTER

A letter from home is worth ten thousand ounces of gold.

CHINESE PROVERB

Last week the Edmonton Journal printed an excerpt of an address by Senator Douglas Roche to a conference of the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness in November. As well as a wobbly premise, some of Senator's vital statistics are not up to date. Statistics just in from Edmonton indicate that, in spite of the tens of millions of dollars committed to federal homeless funding, the shelter count and absolute homeless count is up dramatically. In other words, the homeless crisis is far worse than the Senator thinks.

Rather than criticize the Alberta government, Senator Roche should be criticizing the federal government, which has allocated \$753-million for the homeless and not built any independent living homes. This federal lack of concern and direction is appalling and extremely sad for the hundreds of people we now see lining up to get out of Edmonton's freezing winter weather and into emergency shelters. The reality is that many of these people need not be on the streets! They need not be homeless.

Only half of Edmonton's share of homeless funding could have helped create over 1000 single independent living homes. We know that over 50% of the homeless in shelters are people with some

income who are quite capable of living on their own, if only secure, affordable housing was available. They are on the streets and in shelters primarily because there are no affordable independent single homes available and because Claudette Bradshaw, Minister of the Homeless, is severely disconnected from the people she is supposed to represent.

Senator Roche is likely not aware what a negative impact the exclusive partnering of the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund (EHTF) with non-profit groups has had on the homeless situation in Edmonton. Although private businesses have submitted numerous proposals to build desperately needed very affordable singles housing, they have been turned down - repeatedly. This response is not only discouraging and costly for the businesses that pay to develop proposals that never go forward, but the image of the single homeless person is used to leverage millions of social dollars while the single homeless person languishes in shelters or on the street.

As you read this, a warm, clean building in Edmonton, which could accommodate 20 to 60 singles, sits empty. The owner, a private developer was initially encouraged by the EHTF to submit a proposal. His proposal for this building was subsequently rejected and now he is

about to go bankrupt. The upshot? Not only does this developer lose, but also the 20-60 people who have no alternative but to line up at emergency shelters each night.

Will the \$68-million Federal Affordable Housing Fund earmarked for Alberta fill the void? Sadly NO.

It seems that Alberta's criterion is to provide affordable housing for everyone but the largest group in need - singles. Homes are planned for families, for handicapped and for Aboriginals, but no homes are planned for independent-living singles.

Shamefully this Christmas, as in the past, and probably the future too, the image of a single homeless person will be utilized to extract massive amounts of homeless funding dollars, but the proceeds will not create independent-living homes for singles.

If Senator Roche is serious about helping the greater number of homeless achieve independent-living, I challenge him to get involved and help.

The homeless do not want homeless shelters and ministerial hugs - they want homes.

Peter Goldring,
Member of Parliament



Photo: Pieter de Vos



A First Small Step...

On December 11th, 2002, Employment Support Worker, Gaston Synnott and Our Voice Managing Editor, Natasha Laurence announced their intent to marry - each other. Described by some as a plan "so crazy it just might work", Gaston and Natasha consider the engagement to be the first small step in a journey together that will last a lifetime. May that journey be long and loving - there are so many things to be done.

Baghdad Bombing Blues

John Simpson of the BBC describes the first day of the bombing of Baghdad during the Gulf War, 1991.

January 17

Close by [the Al Rasheed Hotel], a two-thousand-pound penetration bomb landed, but contrary to the gossip in the hotel, neither my eyeballs nor the fillings in my teeth came out. I switched on the radio I found by the bed and listened to President Bush explaining what was going on. It was 5:45 AM and I was soon asleep.

At nine o'clock... Eamonn [Matthews, his producer] tracked me down to tell me he had got our satellite telephone to work. Smuggling the equipment through the airport two weeks before had been a smart piece of work, and in a city without power and without communications we now had both a generator and the means to broadcast to the outside world.

Eamonn moved the delicate white parasol of the dish around until it locked on to the satellite. It was hard to think that something so complex could be achieved so easily. We dialed up the BBC and spoke to the pleas-

ant, cool voice of the traffic manager. It was just as if we were somewhere sensible, and not sheltering against a brick wall from the air raids... Directly after the broadcast was over, I headed out with Anthony [Wood, cameraman] for a drive around. 'Not good take picture now, Mr. John,' said the driver. He was an elderly crook but I had an affection for him all the same. 'Got to work, I'm afraid, Ali.' He groaned...

'Allah.' A white car was following us. 'He see you take picture.' I told Ali to take a sudden right turn, but he lacked the courage. The security policeman waved us down. 'Just looking round,' I said, as disarmingly as I could. 'He say you come with him.' 'Maybe,' said Anthony.

We got back into the car, and followed the white car for a little. The Al Rasheed Hotel was in the distance. 'Go there,' I said loudly, and Ali for once obeyed. The policeman waved and shouted, but by now the sirens were wailing again and the Ministry of Defence, on the left bank of the river, went up in a column of brown and grey smoke.

Ali put his foot down, and made it to the hotel. The policeman in his white car arrived thirty seconds after us, but obediently searched for a place in the public park

while the three of us ran into the hotel and lost ourselves in the crowd which filled the lobby...

Someone shouted that a cruise missile had just passed the window. Following the line of the main road beside the hotel and traveling from south-west to north-east, it flashed across at five hundred miles an hour, making little noise and leaving no exhaust. It was twenty feet long, and was a good hundred yards from our window. It undulated a little as it went, following the contours of the road. It was like the sighting of a UFO.

January 18

Eamonn was having trouble locking the dish on to the satellite... The reason seemed to be the jamming waves put out by American AWACS aircraft, which were accompanying an attack by B-52 bombers.

The security people and the minders started to panic, shouting at us to get inside fast. The bombing started, a rumble that shook the ground and rippled the water in the stagnant pool of sewage that had formed twenty yards from where we had set up the phone. The magnificent red beard of an Irish-

Australian reporter appeared at an upstairs window. 'The power station! The power station's gone up!' There was a rush to see it and film it.

Annoyed by the nervousness of the minders, I stayed by the satellite phone, finishing off my script. 'Keep calm,' I called. 'It's perfectly safe.' There was a thick whistling sound beside my head, and a heavy machine-gun bullet, near the end of its flight, flattened itself on the step in front of me. A minder picked it up and waved it in my face. 'You see? You see? And you say it's safe!' I made a grab for the bullet, but missed...

That night Anthony camped out in the hotel grounds. I eluded the security man in the darkness and found him lurking near the swimming pool. I gave him a hip flask of Laphroaig and helped him settle on a bench from which he could film the night's attacks... I made it up to the fifth floor... took off my dirty clothes for the first time since the war began, arranged the necessary equipment in case my room took a hit (painkillers, field dressing, torch) and read a little Evelyn Waugh by candlelight. The crump of a missile made the flame flicker, but I blew it out and fell asleep.

"Opinions-a-plenty"

EDITORIAL

OPINION



Copping Out!

The spin control and lack of accountability is almost unbelievable. Two members of the Edmonton Police Service, one an Internal Affairs officer, responsible for investigating complaints, Detective Peter Pick, and one a spokesperson

for the Department, Annette Bidniak, have stated publicly that certain lawyers, whom they refuse to name, are filing frivolous complaints in an attempt to bog down EPS's public complaints process. These statements cannot be taken as personal opinion. They are professional opinions, offered in the context of both Pick and Bidniak's respective roles within the Edmonton Police Department. And the allegations themselves are serious,

The Edmonton Police Commission's timid and placating reaction to the issue not only does nothing to inspire public confidence, but is an abdication of responsibility in itself.

no matter what angle you attempt to approach them from.

If there is, indeed, a strategy by certain lawyers to interfere with the public complaints process, as Pick and Bidniak allege, the Edmonton Police Commission and the Chief of Police should be dealing with it seriously. Surely such a strategy jeopardizes the complaints process, a crucial area of responsibility for both the Chief and the Commission. The lawyers responsible must be named and complaints filed against them with the Law Society.

If there is no such strategy, the representatives of the Edmonton Police Service who are claiming there is need to be held accountable for their allegations, and for the suspicious light they have thrown on all

lawyers involved in filing complaints. Here again the integrity of the public complaints process is jeopardized.

To do less than either one of the above options betrays a serious lack of leadership and professionalism on behalf of the Chief of Police.

Yet he has consistently avoided the issue. At the November public meeting of the Edmonton Police Commission, three weeks after the allegations were made public, Chief Wasylyshen could not remember for sure the content of the article. He claimed he had not spoken to either Pick or Bidniak and was therefore uncertain whether or not they had said what they had said. That in itself is astounding. Yet in spite of a self-professed lack of knowledge, he assured the Police Commission that he does not hold similar opinions to Pick and Bidniak.

His response was neither reassuring nor relevant. It's not a question of personal opinion. Pick and Bidniak, members of his force, have made these allegations publicly. The response of the Chief fails to: a) take the words of his own people seriously and b) demonstrate his commitment to ensure a fair and effective public complaints process.

To top it off, the Edmonton Police Commission's timid and placating reaction to the issue not only does nothing to inspire public confidence, but is an abdication of responsibility in itself. It's as if the Chief could do or say anything and they would nod and smile. Who is accountable to who here?

This issue will not go away. It's time for both the Chief of Police and the Police Commission to take their responsibilities to the public seriously.

Natasha Laurence

EDITOR E

Never underestimate an editor's intelligence and never overestimate a publisher's morality.

EDWARD SACHS

A Quiet & Deadly Violence

"The deadliest form of violence is poverty."

— Ghandi

It has often been observed that America is a truly violent nation, as shown by the thousands of cases of social and communal violence that occurs daily in the nation.

Every year, some 20,000 people are killed by others, and additional 20,000 folks kill themselves. Add to this the nonlethal violence that Americans daily inflict on each other, and we begin to see the tracings of a nation immersed in a fever of violence.

But, as remarkable, and harrowing as this level and degree of violence is, it is, by far, not the most violent feature of living in the midst of the American empire.

We live, equally immersed, and to a deeper degree, in a nation that condones and ignores wide-ranging "structural" violence, of a kind that destroys human life with a breathtaking ruthlessness. Former Massachusetts prison official and writer, Dr. James Gilligan observes:

"By 'structural violence' I mean the increased rates of death and disability suffered by those who occupy the bottom rungs

of society, as contrasted by those who are above them. Those excess deaths (or at least a demonstrably large proportion of them) are a function of the class structure; and that structure is itself a product of society's collective human choices, concerning how to distribute the collective wealth of the society. These are not acts of God. I am contrasting 'structural' with 'behavioral violence' by which I mean the non-natural deaths and injuries that are caused by specific behavioral actions of individuals against individuals, such as the deaths we attribute to homicide, suicide, soldiers in warfare, capital punishment, and so on." - (Gilligan, J., MD, Violence: Reflections On a National Epidemic (New York: Vintage, 1996), 192.)

This form of violence, not covered by any of the majoritarian, corporate, ruling-class protected media, is invisible to us and because of its invisibility, all the more insidious. How dangerous is it - really? Gilligan notes: "[E]very fifteen years, on the average, as many people die because of relative poverty as would be killed in a nuclear war that caused 232 million deaths; and every single year, two to three times as many people die from poverty throughout the world as were killed by the Nazi genocide of the Jews over a six-year period. This is, in effect, the equivalent of an ongoing, unending, in fact accelerating, thermonuclear war, or genocide on the weak and poor every year of every decade, throughout the world." [Gilligan, p. 196]

Worse still, in a thoroughly capitalist

society, much of that violence became internalized, turned back on the Self, because, in a society based on the priority of wealth, those who own nothing are taught to loathe themselves, as if something is inherently wrong with themselves, instead of the social order that promotes this self-loathing. This intense self-hatred was often manifested in familial violence as when the husband beats the wife, the wife smacks the son, and the kids fight each other.

This vicious, circular, and invisible violence, unacknowledged by the corporate media, uncriticized in substandard educational systems, and un-understood by the very folks who suffer in its grips, feeds on the spectacular and more common forms of violence that the system makes damn sure we can recognize and must react to.

This fatal and systematic violence may be called The War on the Poor. It is found in every country, submerged beneath the sands of history, buried, yet ever present, as omnipotent as death. In the struggles over the commons in Europe, when the peasants struggled and lost their battles for their communal lands (a precursor to similar struggles throughout Africa and the Americas), this violence was sanctified, by church and crown, as the "Divine Right of Kings" to the spoils of class battle. Scholars Frances Fox-Piven and Richard A. Cloward wrote, in The New Class War (Pantheon, 1982/1985):

"They did not lose because landowners were immune to burning and preaching and rioting. They lost because the usurpations of

owners were regularly defended by the legal authority and the armed force of the state. It was the state that imposed increased taxes or enforced the payment of increased rents, and evicted or jailed those who could not pay the resulting debts. It was the state that made lawful the appropriation by landowners of the forests, streams, and commons, and imposed terrifying penalties on those who persisted in claiming the old rights to these resources. It was the state that freed serfs or emancipated sharecroppers only to leave them landless."

The "Law", then, was a tool of the powerful to protect their interests, then, as now. It was a weapon against the poor and impoverished, then, as now.

It punished retail violence, while turning a blind eye to the wholesale violence daily done by their class masters.

The law was, and is, a tool of state power, utilized to protect the status quo, no matter how oppressive that status was, or is.

Systems are essentially ways of doing things that have concretized into tradition, and custom, without regard to the rightness of those ways. No system that causes this kind of harm to people should be allowed to remain, based solely upon its time in existence. Systems must serve life, or be discarded as a threat and a danger to life.

Such systems must pass away, so that their great and terrible violence passes away with them.

Mumia Abu-Jamal

Them's Fightin' Words

P PEACE

... peace is a militant thing ... any peace movement must have behind it a higher passion than the desire for war. No one can be a pacifist without being ready to fight for peace and die for peace.

MARY HEATON VORSE

I don't believe in war, but I don't hate soldiers.

Well, I ended 2002 with an exciting episode I had thought I was much too old for -- I was in a bar brawl at Rosie's -- a verbal one, luckily. I asked a soldier if they were paying him enough to put his son's life, as well as his own, in harm's way by using depleted uranium weaponry. He told me to shut my cakehole and stop talking about stuff I didn't know anything about -- and the battle was on. His companion and mine practically had nets over us respectively by the time the

owner shut off the lights and chased us all out.

I don't believe in war. I think killing people is bad. I admire personal courage. I come from a very old military family on my mother's side -- military that goes right back to India, but I do my fighting on the side of peace. At the same time, I honor the memory of people like my Uncle Alan who, with the Canadian contingent of technicians, went in ahead of the first wave of landings at Dunkirk and who, after the war, became a gunnery instructor. He fought Lou Gehrig's disease for twenty years (the second longest survivor of the disease) until the only parts of his body he could move were his eyes. I value his legacy of personal integrity and unfailing courage. Uncle Alan would have thought a weapon that throws up a cloud of poisonously radioactive gas in front of our own advancing troops positively obscene.

So do I.

Depleted Uranium is the waste left in nuclear reactors after the initial heat producing reaction is finished. Mixed into steel it creates an immensely hard alloy, which gives off no radiation and is perfectly safe to handle. (It's good for things like armor plate and armor piercing missiles and those aprons you wear when you are getting an x-ray). But when those missiles sublime and boil away into the air on impact, the uranium and plutonium is thrown into the air in the vicinity of the strike. One particle of plutonium in a lung can see a young family losing a parent at forty. Hundreds of those missiles are fired.

During the Gulf war towns along the Kuwait border took so many missile hits that the cumulative radiation levels approached that of Hiroshima and the subsequent cancer appearances and deformed births increased by eighty percent. Have we gotten rid of nuclear weapons or just downsized them?

I don't believe in war, but I don't hate

soldiers. I believe when they leave the service they should be free to have a life -- that the peril of war should end for them when their tour is over, not stay lodged in some hidden crevice of tissue. We did not hear about the personnel, military and civilian, who suffered radiation poisoning during the bomb testing of the sixties until almost all had passed away. We don't have that excuse this time. We know a lot of Gulf War, Kosovo and Bosnian veterans are ill, that the government both in Canada and the US is paying huge amounts in compensation, and blaming anything else they can think of for these illnesses. It's time for us to stop accepting the lies. This is obscene and a waste of human life far beyond the battlefield.

Peace activists and soldiers hardly ever agree on anything, but this is one issue they could both support for perfectly valid reasons from both sides. This can be done. Lets do it.

Theresa McBryan



Rivers of the Heart

Hanging numb in this despair, pretext of not a care and they watch but do not see, rendered sightless by snow blindness, oblivious to internal tears flowed silently and free...

- unknown writer

There is a story I would like to share with you about how my writing has changed me. I have learned that if I can put this much effort into my writing I can do the same with my life. I never imagined when I was a street person I would be working and doing the hobby I love -- "writing."

It really dismays me sometimes that I see so many homeless people here in our city. I thought this was the city of champi-

ons. Some kind of champions, if there are still people with no place to call home. There has been a lot of stuff written, and analyzed but very little done. I have been there and I'll say from first-hand experience it's not a thing to be taken lightly. I am grateful everyday for the things I have because I could be back there in a flash.

The area I live in now is somewhat safe. When I see people sleeping outside, I don't bother them or call the police because the poor have enough problems and it seems to me they have to deal with a lot of biases.

I remember sleeping outside and not being able to go into a place because I wasn't dressed right. I used to sleep behind a hotel in the downtown area. I was out there for the winter. The one thing that sticks in my mind the most is seeing the advertising on a tall building across the way. There was a sign that had the look of a planet wrapped in rings. So my brother and me called it the Daily Planet and the name of our home "Lois Lanes." We'd gotten blankets from places we already knew about and the Bissell Centre. We always got by through panhandling or selling the Our Voice paper. I look back to those days and put myself where the homeless are when I walk down my street. I sure can relate and never want to go back there. Still, there is a saying, "Never say never," because it could happen to you.

I've got plenty to be thankful for and the

payoff is shown through my way of living. My job is good and my apartment is my home. I ride to work on my bike and have wiped out badly a few times, but you know, life's like that. You fall down, pick yourself up, and start all over again. I've picked up my life so much its totally unbelievable.

This whole change took place when I asked for help. The best change I think would be if people could help others and not judge them by the way they live. The change will take place if we just let them be themselves.

My year is just beginning and the Creator has much more to show me. I'm praying for the less fortunate and giving what I can. I'm still writing; I have my cat to feed, and I'm grateful for the things I have today. My life is good, and I'm taking it one day at a time. Sometimes I feel like quitting my job and leaving town, but usually after I have my dinner and calm down a bit, I decide I can hack it and I keep on truckin'.

I wish you all a Happy New Year, and remember - when you pray for help, you get it.

Len Blackfox Martial.
E-mail: len0853@yahoo.com

Lives... On the Rocks



Every winter a number of people are found frozen to death

Just before Christmas, 1997, Glen Boulet was found frozen to death across from the liquor store on 96th Street. He had attempted to come in from the bitter cold, but every door was barred. Born with fetal alcohol syndrome, he was an alcoholic; he had been drinking the night he died.

There is no place out of the cold for many

of those who are tormented by addictions and the resulting homelessness. The George Spady Centre has 72 overnight shelter beds available for people who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, but they are all taken by 7:30 or 8:00 p.m. every night. During the daytime, from about 7:00 a.m. till 9:00 p.m. there is usually a drop-off of warmth and food. After the drop-ins close, the bars are open for another five or six hours, but to frequent bars costs money. Once even those late night havens close their doors, the only warm place may be a parkade, a bank machine entry or a grate blowing warm air. There is no mat program this year anywhere in the inner city. Every winter a number of people are found frozen to death

The Hope Mission's Herb Jamieson Centre, across the street from the George Spady, takes only men who are sober. They can shelter 249 men, and have an overflow area at the Hope Mission, which can shelter another 40 men in the chapel. Men who are intoxicated or high on drugs are turned away. They are told to go across to the Spady Centre, but Spady turns away 25 to 50 people per night. With no place to go, some hang around the neighbourhood waiting for morning.

To deal with the problem, with funding from the Edmonton Housing Trust Fund, David Hornig, Project Manager for the Herb Jamieson Centre, brought in two portables to shelter up to 40 people a night who are turned away from the Spady Centre.

The project was delayed by an appeal launched by the 97th Street and Area Business Association. Hornig said, "A lot of the businesses believe we'll be bringing people into the neighbourhood, but that's not the case. Most of the people would be in the area anyhow, so it is better for them to be inside."

The appeal by the Business Association was heard December 19, but turned down. The temporary shelters opened for business December 20.

Garry Gordon, Director of Housing for the city, said the trailers are meeting the need for shelter for one very difficult group, the people turned away from the George Spady Centre. But they will not solve the problem of shelter in general, for the women who come to the Women's Emergency Accommodation

Centre (WEAC) once all their beds are taken or for people who are barred from all shelters due to behavioral concerns. WEAC said women are not turned away once the beds are taken, but the overflow have to sit in chairs in the dining area overnight.

There are some facilities being considered for the homeless women. Gordon toured the old Urban Manor building, now owned by builder Terry Draginda as one possibility. But he said while that building is in good repair, it is too large. Only the bottom two floors would be used. And the rental cost of about \$6000 per month would be for the whole building.

There are also other plans in the works to deal with homelessness for next year. "About 400 units are coming on stream by September," Gordon said. "That should deal with most of the problems unless we continue to have people flowing into the city. But it still will not deal with people who are being continually barred from facilities. I think we need a small facility to deal with the really difficult problems."

There is an overnight drop-in on the south side for homeless youth, and Gordon said he believes something similar is needed in the inner city for hard-to-shelter homeless adults.

Even the most difficult to house due to mental illness, brain damage, or severe addictions need a safe place to come in out of the cold. Taking a hard line and saying they brought it on themselves is not the answer.

Linda Dumont

FREEZE F

Freeze, freeze,
thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite
so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the
waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remembered not.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Facing Fear

Human Security in a Globalizing World

The University of Alberta's
International Week 2003

January 27 - February 1, 2003

While we are bombarded with reasons to fear terrorist, "security" forces are legitimated through funding and ostensible public support. Does police security bring about a climate of peace? Is the world becoming more dangerous or are our fears being manipulated? What can we change in our daily lives to change the present and future in positive ways?

This year International Week will focus on human security and our role as global citizens. Fear and insecurity are profound sentiments that we feel personally, locally, and globally. International Week gives us an opportunity to examine the roots of oppression, a growing feeling of global insecurity, and issues such as war, inequity, poverty, environment, human rights, diversity, dissent and personal empowerment!

A broad range of issues will be considered including conflict, poverty, HIV/AIDS, gender, aboriginal issues, and the environment. Keynote speaker (January 27th) is journalist and military analyst Gwynne Dyer, who will discuss the "War on Terror" and the next phase of operation. Human rights activist, filmmaker and author Sally Armstrong will address the failure of the international community to resolve conflicts such as the one in Afghanistan. The week will also include a discussion on inequality as a source of insta-

bility in the world, the film "Slavery: A Global Investigation," and a photo exhibit on human trafficking. University of Alberta law student Alfred Orono will share his experiences as an intern with the International Criminal Tribunal in Arusha this past summer and the Muslim Students' Association will discuss Islam, terror and the new world order. Programs will examine issues of relevance to various regions of the world including Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East, and issues close to home such as homelessness, violence against women, racism and homophobia. Several workshops are designed for personal analysis and to prompt us to change the world by changing ourselves.

To wrap it all up you will definitely want to attend the concert on Friday, January 31: Uniting Rhythms of Resistance. This event brings together six unique performances rooted in social change. From the down home folk singing of Guy Smith, to the political hardcore punk rock of Passion/Revolt, the beautiful melodies of Asani, the electronic hip-happenin' grooves of ReflectUs and Vizion Issa, to Argentine Tango and Warparty, Rhythms of Resistance is an inspiration for cohesive action. Tickets are \$10, \$12 at the door.

Events are open to the public and, with the exception of the concert, are free of charge. The full program is available at www.international.ualberta.ca/iweek or in printed form at the International Centre and throughout campus.





Rain is the
best policeman.

POLICE MOTTO

COP TALK 2

If there are concerns about an increase in violence by police officers, then let's have a meeting about it.

- David Finlay
Chair of Edmonton
Police Commission

PART 2: Interview with David Finlay, Chair of Edmonton's Police Commission

At the November 20 public meeting of the Edmonton Police Commission (EPC), the Public Complaints Committee of the EPC presented a summary of its report. The Committee chaired by Shauna Seneca, included Alexandra Lapko, the Public Complaints monitor hired by the Commission, and David Finlay, Chair of the Commission. The two-page summary represents one year spent reviewing the Public Complaints process and the Commission's role in that process. The raw material included 35 concluded Internal Affairs files, ongoing meetings with the Staff Sergeant of Internal Affairs, and a review of the responsibilities of the Edmonton Police Commission. The report summary outlined several recommendations, the first of which was: We are satisfied with the Internal Affairs process and we do not see the need for an outside agency to investigate complaints.

In the following interview, **Our Voice** questions David Finlay about both the report and its recommendations.

Our Voice: I have a couple of questions about the appearance that the Edmonton Police Commission is acting as an apologist for the Edmonton Police Service rather than a public body with oversight responsibilities. These questions are directly related to the Public Complaints process.

Finlay: I don't know how broadly held that view is. I have talked to a number of people who don't have that view, but certainly people are entitled to their opinions about what

the role of the Police Commission is. Its role is defined by legislation, so we have some limited authority. We are completely independent, in that we have no financial reward that arises out of any decision we make. We are appointed by City Council. We're about as independent as you can get. I don't think that we are apologists for the Police Service. There have been many examples where we have disagreed with what the Police Service has done. We have tried to make corrections, and ask questions of the Chief. That's what our role is, to ask questions, and to try and effect policy.

Our Voice: About the summary of the report on the Public Complaints process that was tabled at November meeting of the Police Commission. Shauna Seneca headed up the Committee responsible for that report. The Committee was quite small and quite limited in the scope of who it approached to gain information about how the Edmonton public actually felt about the Complaints process.

Finlay: Yeah, actually that wasn't the role of the Committee. The role of that Committee was to look at what the Commission's function is in terms of monitoring complaints. So it was a very narrow focus. It wasn't like the Police Act Review Committee which was going to look at the whole system of complaints. What Shauna did was review a number of files in Internal Affairs with the view of: does it appear that there is a system in place that is thorough and objective in terms of those complaints.

Our Voice: It seems, then that the report crossed the line, because the report's initial recommendation was that you are completely satisfied that there is no need for an independent body to investigate complaints. To go from the very narrow scope of its investigation to making such a broad recommendation doesn't seem responsible. To make that type of recommendation it would seem that you would need to speak to a larger and more diverse group of people and organizations. There are people and groups in Edmonton who do have serious concerns

about the effectiveness of the Public Complaints process.

Finlay: And they can make representations to the legislative committee that's looking at the review of the Police Act. Our role was to review the complaints and the investigations and, just from that review, if we found for example, that the investigations were not thorough, in our opinion, the Commission would say that the Complaint system wasn't working very well, but that's different than looking at the complaints system within the Police Act.

Our Voice: I think people may have a hard time making that distinction.

Finlay: I think that's true. And I think that the expectation is that the Police Commission has a greater role in that.

Our Voice: But didn't the Edmonton Police Commission make a submission to the MLA Committee that is reviewing the Police Act?

Finlay: Yes, actually, yes.

Our Voice: And did any part of the submission address the Public Complaints process?

Finlay: Yes.

Our Voice: And in that submission what was your opinion?

Finlay: Generally we have come to the conclusion that we would not recommend a provincial investigative body be formed.

Our Voice: Because you feel that the public complaints process is adequate and fair?

Finlay: Yes.

Our Voice: I'm sure you are aware that there are people and organizations, the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association being one of them, myself, being one of the individuals, who do have serious concerns about the complaints process. Would it be possible for the

Edmonton Police Commission to consider gathering that type of information? There may be insights and experience you're missing in the information you have so far. If most of the information you're gathering is from Edmonton Police Service Internal Affairs officers and from files that have been completed, you could be missing a lot of crucial information the Commission needs to answer the question: is the public complaints system protecting the public, is the system serving the needs of people who have had trouble in their interactions with the police service.

Finlay: I don't know whether it's the Criminal Trial Lawyers in its entirety that's concerned or whether it's a few people in the CTLA, but certainly I would be prepared to meet with them. I think if the CTLA wants to, as an organization, meet with us about the complaint process, as long as they recognize that we have a process, and we don't have any way to change that process, if they have concerns about how that process is being administered, by all means, we'd like to hear that. And I think you heard the Chief say that at the last meeting, if there are concerns about and increase in violence by police officers, then let's have a meeting about it.

Our Voice: I would hope that there would be some transparency around those meetings, and that there would be some willingness on the part of the Police Commission to gather the experiences and insights of people beyond the Police Department itself, beyond Internal Affairs.

Finlay: We have done that in the past, not with the public complaints process. We had the Prostitution Task Force. That was about two years ago. I'm using that as an example of going outside of the Police Service. So that's certainly something we would be prepared to do.

Our Voice: That would be a great idea.

Natasha Laurence



Mindless Circles

Round, around we tread
Tightly packed snow in threadbare
slippers. It's only minus eleven
Skinny blue coveralls frame
Our bodies.

Overhead steel grills protect escapes
From within four thick concrete walls.
East and west, two eyes watch
Our circles as we chill,
Videotaping movements for the guard,
Sitting warm in his bulletproof bubble,
To see. Is he trained to lipread?

In two and threes, we plod together
Yattering about old and fresh memories.
The conversations go round and round,
Starting in the middle of misadventures;
Few comprehend the Now, less deal with presents
Given us by sordid penal system - gifts of circles
To enchant our feet, fresh air for dusty lungs
And sharpening minds dulled with recycled,
Institution air as we pair
And triple in our snare
Like unwanted germs.

The Circle in mindless
As Sisyphus-toil,
Ending at the beginning,
The bottom of the Mountain.

Yard-up is over, remanded
Until tomorrow.

Tom Hind

REMANDED

Edmonton Remand Centre is the worst detention facility in Canada.

It all started in mid-October -- late at night -- 1:30 am to be exact. A prank I pulled went a strange way - it went up in flames. Two prowling cars, lights out, crept up the alley. One from the north, the other from the south; long story short -- I was taken to the cop shop and booked. The recommendation to the judge, that bail be denied, was granted to the arresting cop. At the court's weird pleasure, I was granted a 32-day stay in the Remand Centre and my whole focus in life shifted without my permission. HA! How it shifted and tilted, as I was ping-ponged through the receiving process and finally ended up in 4C, known as "the old man's unit".

The line "welcome to my nightmare" resounded through my stay. I thought with prior experiences in government hotels (though none recent), I was prepared for anything. Guess again. I got a new perspective on corrections, Alberta-style -- modern version. I have to admit, I thought the brand of justice delivered to me was the Texan variety, wherein hanging and blood-

for-blood appeasement is still rampantly raw and cruel.

Guards in the Edmonton Remand Centre, on the whole, are brutal in hustling you for a court appearance. Also, they practice sleep deprivation techniques I read about 30 or so years ago -- the kind of things practiced by the Germans on unsuspecting prisoners of the Third Reich. Part of the technique has to do with heat control and food control (deprivation). I met a native man who was on a double diet (two trays worth) because he lost over 25 pounds in two weeks due to lack of proper nourishment. Twelve hundred and fifty calories a day is hardly an adequate intake for a 200 - 250 pound man. The so-called "stir fry" served is a scoopful of rice (small) and a small ladle of greasy gravy with very small remnants of shredded meat floating in it. No vegetables inhabit the "stir fry". To this day, I wonder what is stirred in the gelatin-like goo, certainly nothing nutritional. Not to be unfair, once every three weeks we were given an orange. This was our fresh fruit intake for the month. One night, when a squad of guards was doing a "toss and search" of unit 4C, some of the items taken included juices used by diabetics, foodstuffs bought with canteen money (mostly junk food, brought to the cells for munching at leisure). To finish with the food gripes, the Remand Centre built to house 500 bodies, yet as many as 680 people are detained. Gang-units add to the numbers of eaters. Thus less food gets spread around. Piddly portions insult one's stomach, be it big or small. Piddly portions fire up a bartering system, two jams for a peanut butter; potatoes for your two boiled eggs; four sugars for a package of instant coffee and the

like. Much of the barter is a result of "cost-effectiveness" when it comes to food. On your way to or from court, you may be lucky enough to be given a bag lunch; usually, bag lunches contain fruit, a sandwich and maybe a few shreds of celery, salt, pepper and a coffee or tea. Fatten you on the way to court, starve you after -- HA! That's how absurd the provincial Remand Centre is.

The general attitude of the typical guard is one of amused tolerance mixed in with hostility and belligerence. Their mentality, on the whole, is meandering awakeness; except when they fall asleep in their cocoon-bubble, spread out in various postures of sleep in reclining chairs. While on shift, I witnessed both male and female guards sleeping away, earning their excessive salary, unconcerned because of a buddy wakeup system established to cover their tardiness. Cost-effectiveness, eh? How do sleeping guards add to it, I ask? Some of the guards are as bad as the cost-effective food. To be fair, however, there are a few who have not forgotten your humanity, despite internment, and who will laugh and lighten up the mood and atmosphere of the unit during their shift (hi Speedy!) This type of guard is a Godsend of sorts, and though there is the odd good guard, many are very mean-spirited. One ugly and authoritarian female guard, whom I dubbed Miss Piggy, used to shake up the unit with her exacting and often foolish demands. She was wired to the P.A. system in her bubble and was constantly screeching out things like "you do NOT lean on the railing!" Maybe the guy she screamed at had arthritis or high blood pressure and needed to pause for a few moments to get his breath. She did her cell

and unit inspection with white plastic gloves on, looking for dust or other such creatures belonging to the germ world. It was as though she had been just released from the army and was bucking and braying with some form of dissatisfaction with life, taking it out on those helpless to escape her comments and demands. Some of the male guards were of the same mentality, liked sticking needles in you if you gave them the opportunity. New arrivals were particularly made the butt of their jokes, done over the P.A. because they did not know the rules and were prime targets for sick humor.

For comic relief, as we were double-bunked in a ten by six cell, we'd joke about the guards, making them the butt of our humor in a get-even kind of way. In some ways, not much has changed in the corrections system. But one thing I've noticed is that the trend, over the years, has become more punitive. The humanity of the 70's and 80's has pretty much disappeared into some black hole. This, to my mind, is not a good. The brotherhood of guards is strongly displayed during random searches and on excursions to and from court, in the tunnel connecting ERC with the law courts building -- bracelets put on too tightly, bear baiting guards, looking for a fight -- this type of thing.

Edmonton Remand Centre has the reputation of being the worst in Canada. I would hope the recent MLA Corrections Review Committee looked into this aspect. Where is their overdue report?

Tom Hind

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

Directed by Peter Jackson Written by Frances Walsh, Philippa Boyens, Stephen Sinclair and Peter Jackson.

He Says:

In the Fellowship of the Ring, director Peter Jackson introduced the world to his stunning vision of J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy world of Middle Earth. In *The Two Towers*, Frodo Baggins' (Elijah Wood) quest to save his world from destruction continues. While this movie has the same strengths and weaknesses as its predecessor, it moves much quicker and has a darker tone.

Throughout the movie, feelings of danger and fear are never far off, but a few well placed moments of humour help to lighten the load. The fellowship has been sundered and Frodo must take the one ring of power to Mount Doom with only the help of his friend Samwise Gamgee (Sean Astin).

While hopelessly lost, they find help from the most unusual of sources. They trap the ghoulish Gollum (a computer generated creature composed of tortured flesh clinging to bone) whose mind was destroyed by the ring long ago. Frodo befriends the vile creature and it agrees to lead them to Mordor home of the evil Sauron. Gollum's struggle with his own insanity and obsession with the ring offer the funniest and most insightful moments in this three hour fantasy epic. Frodo can't help but pity the creature no matter how deranged or repulsive his behaviour. He knows a similar fate awaits him if he gives in to the seductive power of the ring before it is destroyed.

The films' plot bounces craftily along three separate paths with minimum confusion. Although moviegoers who haven't read the books might feel threatened by the vast array of names, peoples and creatures presented, it's easy to just sit back and enjoy the view. It doesn't matter if you can't tell the difference between an oliphant (huge walking fortresses similar to Hannibal's elephants) and the Nazgul (ring wraiths mounted on flying reptiles) they all look extremely cool. In fact, no matter how short a time they survive on the screen, the attention to detail of the many different combatants' costume and weaponry is amazing. For a third of the film the ranger Aragorn, (Viggo Mortensen) the gruff dwarf Gimli (John Rhys-Davies) and the elven archer Legolas (Orlando Bloom) strive to save the horse lords of Rohan from the dark scourge of the evil wizard Saruman (Christopher Lee.) The action bogs down slightly during some of these scenes, tripping over a sentimental love triangle between Aragorn, his true love, the elven princess Arwen (Liv Tyler) and a shield maiden of Rohan. These don't last long however and our heroes are soon hewing flesh and bone in the abundant battle scenes. They must overcome the fierce wargs, giant hyena-like creatures, before settling in for the biggest fight of the film-- the battle of Helm's Deep. This night time battle, pitting a handful of weary soldiers versus ten thousand orcs is mind boggling to say the least. It sets the bar very high for all future fantasy movies-- just as *Saving Private Ryan* did for war flicks.

The last part of the story focusses on the two hobbits Merry (Dominic Monaghan) and Pippin (Billy Boyd) who were captured by the murderous Uruk-hai, mutated orcs with horrible faces and teeth who fear neither sun nor sword. Once they escape they

are confronted by a huge walking tree known as Treebeard. Jackson once again comes through with an amazing rendition of Treebeard and the Ents, sentient protectors of the forest. It is here Tolkien's allegory about the evils of the modern world encroaching on and destroying the older natural world shines through. When Merry and Pippin finally convince Treebeard to make war on Saruman by showing him a clearcut hacked by orcs, it's hard not to wish trees really could come to life and avenge the senseless slaughter of their brothers. With our own world perched on the edge of war Tolkien's message about the evils of war-mongering is made even more potent by Jackson's film.

The *The Two Towers* is astounding, but not flawless. The forces of good always triumph virtually unscathed against the direst of odds, sending handfuls of orcs to their doom with each swing of their swords. And the sound track, complete with a whole lot of Enya, gets a little annoying. It's a must see for Tolkien or fantasy fans in general and they will not be disappointed. But if you prefer easily digestible action movies handed to you in bite-sized Hollywood pieces you might be better off with less challenging fare. It's not a journey for the faint of heart.

(Rating: 4 out of 5)
Phil Duperron

She Says:

It was hard to keep expectation at bay - a year's a bloody long wait to see new sites of Middle Earth. The movie opens with Gandalf the Grey's amazing battle with the Balrog; this ride is going to be delicious, I thought, and I was right. I'm not a fair critic,

love makes one blind to faults; this movie was often pure art to me, my breath stolen by the color of the sky as Frodo looks upon a besieged Gondor, the stunning beauty of Legolas and Aragorn, a tableaux of the Elven army, Gandalf the White falling like Moses on a hideous black sea of shrieking, foaming Uruk-hai (frankly, the most terrifying S.O.B.'s in my cinematic experience). I missed Frodo, his part much diminished here, but we were introduced to Gollum (Smeagol) who provides better insight into heroin addiction than *Trainspotting*. I hope he's nominated for best supporting actor; he really did his homework. I can just see the weird little id incarnate slithering up to the podium, his greedy, hesitant fingers fondling the "preshizz we wons" then bolting into the wings, clutching it ferociously, the escorting beauty left jobless, wondering "what the hell...?"

Different in tone, I found *The Two Towers* a pleasing yin to *The Fellowship's* yang - the sun was high in the first epic, now the moon is out, the characters separated, troubled, lonely; bewildered by the manifest evil's intensity and wondering if they're equal to it. Not usually partial to battle scenes, I was on the edge of my seat here, as the visuals are remarkable, the gore not overbearing and the heroism constantly present. Peter Jackson loves this story, he loves these characters and frames them in an adoring, knowing light. There were endless jewels of cinematic art, especially one of Legolas being grabbed up, amazingly, onto a running horse (you'll know what I mean when you see it) and Aragorn throwing open doors to confront the King of Rohan about the impending slaughter (my friend, Nova, and I giggled like schoolgirls over the beautiful,

fearless Aragorn - that's a man you don't see everyday). *The Two Towers* is a heavy fantastical tapestry, this brought into sharp relief when someone's weeping or subtler issues play out. The Fellowship of the Ring allowed similar scenes resonance and poignancy, not so here, but the grip of evil is stronger now and destinies thunder in their chains.

If forced to detract, I raised an eyebrow at the Ents (huge walking, talking trees); the way they looked, Elmo could have popped out of a branch to goof out his two bits on the Dark Lord Sauron and I wouldn't have wondered why. Why did they have eyes like antique teddy bears instead of just knots of wood? Oh well, oh well. Also, my friend was spot on to say the humor was "pandering"; perhaps a ham-fisted attempt at levity, these being darker chapters. Lastly, the belabored tangle with Arwyn and the presence of this Rohan chick is off-pissing. Aragorn loves ME (and Nova, too, a little bit...sometimes) Bottom line, of course, don't miss it; well, only if you haven't seen *The Fellowship of the Ring*, then you might as well be mapless in the mines of Moria - fearful, expectant, intrigued, but utterly lost. I've read no reviews yet but know other aficionados who rate *The Two Towers* lower than *The Fellowship of the Ring*. I cannot do this, I liked it equally for different reasons and pray *The Return of the King* will be a perfect synthesis. Godspeed Mr. Jackson, I know you can do it.

Keyna Laurence

T TOWER

The tower nearest the water gets the moonlight first.

CHINESE PROVERB





THE POTTYMOUTHS

David Ahenakew, like Trent Lott, was held in high esteem until he, as well, decided to let his guano-minded ideas be heard.

As a rule I don't make New Years Resolutions. No one I know keeps them and I prefer to concentrate on other things on New Years Eve anyways -- things like will I run out of beer or smokes and can I avoid making a fool of myself in front of the hot babes. This year is different though.

This New Years Eve I promise to ignore all race and religious cards and start dividing people into one of two groups: human beings or feces spewing weasels. Human beings are good intentioned, warm individuals who open their minds and hearts to all. Feces spewing weasels are well, people like Trent Lott or David Ahenakew.

Trent Lott, a United States Senator, was most likely always a feces-spewing weasel despite his high standing in U.S. politics. Unfortunately no one noticed until after he was elected and opened his sphincter-like mouth to defecate forth his admiration for former U.S. Presidential candidate Strom Thurmann, a man who ran on a pro-segregation platform to keep the "coloreds in their place."

David Ahenakew, like Trent Lott, was held in high esteem until he, as well, decided to let his guano-minded ideas be heard.

The fact that both these walking talking rectums are or have been politicians should not confuse the issue. Their kind is a hidden

bleeding pustule on society that for the most part goes on ignored by all. The fact that they are politicians is the only reason the views of these feces spewing weasels became known in the first place.

I used to look up to David Ahenakew. As a chief of the Assembly of First Nations and a champion for those who were powerless and without a voice he was an example to all. His native heritage be damned, his tireless battles on behalf of Canada's native peoples, I felt made him an inspiration to everyone. a hero despite his race, social background or education. Perhaps it made him more impressive to some but all real heroes transcend those boundaries anyways.

When my father received the order of Canada, the fact that he was joining the company of such (in my mind at the time) worthy individuals as Mr. Ahenakew made me especially proud of his award. My father had joined an elite group of well-intentioned people who had done something to

make the world a better place.

Then this last December Ahenakew had to go and open his porcelain bowl receiving orifice and drag himself down to the level of Ernst Zundel and the Aryan Nations. His accomplishments are still on a grand scale but his motives and ideals are now forever soiled as a Depends landfill.

The trouble is these views don't only reside with people like Ahenakew or Lott. These idiots in the skins of men are everywhere. Their skin color ranges from white to black and they worship everything from Gods nailed to wood to moon goddesses.

As a child I had two friends, Dietmar and Axel, who had immigrated to Canada from Germany with their parents. Because of their accents, imperfect English and ignorance of customs like Halloween and Thanksgiving they were often ridiculed by our fellow classmates. I, on the other hand, never let such things effect my opinion of them. My parents raised me better than that.

As the white son and brother of black males, a Metis female and the nephew, cousin and lord knows what else to such a racial and cultural mix that family gatherings looked like a meeting of the United Nations, I was very much oblivious to such things. Dietmar and Axel were always welcome in my house and our family made it known. They came over to play often.

That is they used to come over and play until their feces spewing weasel parents found out my dad was black. One day Axel told me his mother even said I looked "too Jewish" to be his friend. And that, dear readers, is where the problem starts.

Children aren't born with these ideas and no amount of suffering, whether it is in the occupied territories or a residential school can justify their propagation. Take twenty kids from twenty different cultures, stick them on a field with a ball without the weasels around and chances are they'll play together. If one of the children is ostracized, chances are the so-called adults in their life have already corrupted them.

The response to Ahenakew is driving me over the edge, too. People with the ear of the press or at least the guy on the next bar stool are wanting to remove his Order of Canada while ignoring all the other walking outhouses that have been previously honored.

Mayor Bill Smith of Edmonton wants to write letters and petition Members of Parliament to strip Ahenakew of his award. This is the same guy who refuses to rename Emily Murphy Park. Emily Murphy, despite her achievements in the woman's suffrage movement was a virulent racist and espoused much of the same doctrine as the Nazi Party. Ms. Murphy espoused eugenics and the sterilization of the mentally handicapped and what she called "inferior races", including blacks and native peoples.

Perhaps if Mr. Ahenakew moves to Edmonton and keeps his nose clean for a few years Mayor Bill will name a park after him.

That or people take the other side of the coin and say we should forgive him because his incredible accomplishments as an Aboriginal man in a white society. An insult I believe, to all native people who accomplish great things with out ejecting such aural diarrhea.

So in the New Year I make this resolution: To heck with your race, to heck with your religion. From now on you're either a feces-spewing weasel or not. The choice is up to you.

Dave Dutton Fraser

WEASEL W

One of our defects as a nation is a tendency to use what have been called "weasel words." When a weasel sucks eggs the meat is sucked out of the egg. If you use a "weasel word" after another there is nothing left of the other.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

BUS PRAYER:

P PRAYER

Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness ... It is better in **prayer** to have a heart without words than words without a heart.

MOHANDAS K. GANDHI



Donate a Bus Ride Month Prayer

January is the month that the ETS Transit Union, the City of Edmonton and other organizations get involved to help people with their transportation problems. I encourage those reading this article to contribute tickets on the buses they use or donate money to help provide tickets. During the cold months or winter, I am grateful I do not have to wait long for a bus; I can imagine how cold it would be for someone who had no choice but to walk because of the cost of fare. There was a time in Toronto when affording bus fare was difficult for me. I'd like to make it easier for others.

If you find this prayer thought provoking, pass it on. Mail it, e-mail it, hand it to

friends. I give tickets and send a note to a friend who still gives me rides often. Donate it in honor of a favorite bus driver or your favorite bus route.

Please modify the body of this prayer to suit your sense of spirituality. Please forward this to congregations, and others whom you think would help improve the prayer and get involved. Suggest that your minister have a transportation sermon or host a service on a bus. I would like to see congregations across Edmonton have a prayer for those lacking transportation and an awareness of the issues that people lacking transportation face. Empathetic question could be asked. Ask congregants to bus it. Ask congregants to see how difficult it would be to get to a counseling program across town in the evening. When possible use a collection plate to collect bus tickets. (In the Jewish community, not money or items can be brought on the Sabbath) Walk to service and donate the tickets.

Jaima Geller

Holy One, Creator, God, Allah

We gather to pray in your name for those who need help with transportation over these winter months.

We pray that...

...mothers do not have to choose between milk or a bus ride.

...a jobless person can afford to get to a job interview.

...the weather is good so that a parent can walk to community centre or that transportation is provided so that the family can afford to get to a support group.

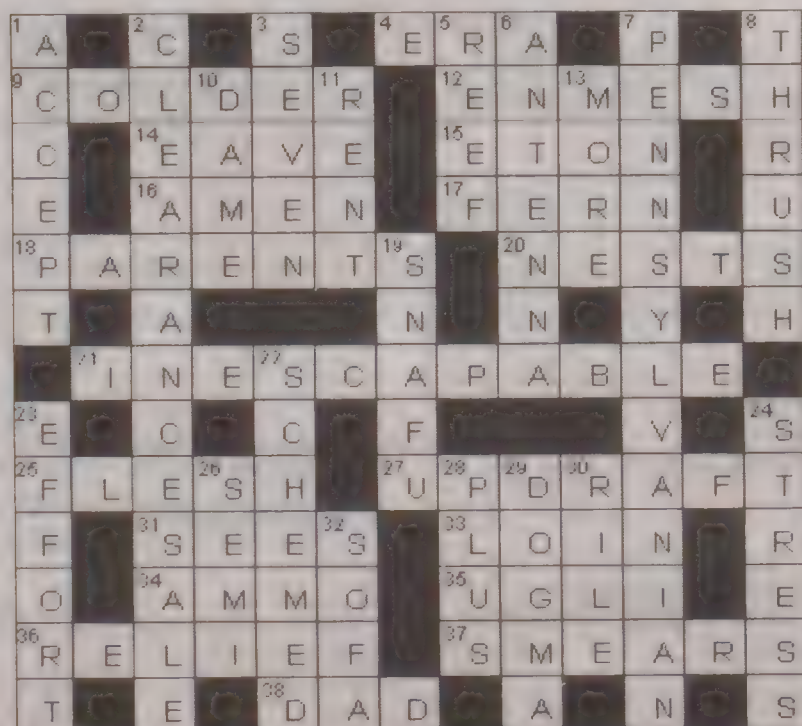
... the isolated, depressed, person is not further isolated by lack of transit.

... no congregant lacks the spirituality of our faith because of not being able to get there.

...people in our community and congregation have the compassion to give bus tickets so that those in our neighborhoods and our faith community can get to where they need to go.

Compassionate One, teach us Your way of compassion. Bless and preserve the caring spirit of this community and the organizations that translate spirit into action.

Please send your suggestions for this prayer, how you used this prayer or how you involved you group in the Donate a Ride program to jgeller@bissellcentre.org. Bissell Centre is one of the agencies that benefit from the Donate a Ride program.





had been abroad for a while, just before the shooting.

As is usual in such high profile cases, the truth will probably never be known beyond a reasonable doubt, since there are too many interests at stake and too many people willing and in the position to forge evidence or testimony. Still, there can be little doubt that this attack was of absolutely no benefit to the government, since it rekindled a strike that was faltering. As a result, it provided a big boost to the opposition's campaign to oust President Chavez.

Opposition leaders' taking advantage of the attack and the relentless media campaign of the five private television stations and eight or so major newspapers, which consistently present only one per-

spective for interpreting all events that take place in Venezuela, upset many pro-Chavez Venezuelans even more with the media than they had already been. On the eighth day of the strike, "Chavistas" surrounded the headquarters of all of the major television stations in the capital and of several in the rest of the country, staging loud pot-banging "cacerolazos." (The opposition had already pioneered such protests on a regular basis at the building of the state-run television channel, ever since the two-day coup in April, but this never received any media attention, not even from the affected station.) After a couple hours of pot-banging, the demonstrators withdrew, at the behest of pro-Chavez legislators and OAS general secretary Cesar Gaviria. To the media, these protests were additional proof that Venezuela is a totalitarian country, of which Chavez is the dictator. Journalists argued that their lives were threatened, even though it was quite clear that these were peaceful protests. Still, the director of one TV channel even went so far as to argue that the protests constituted "genocide." One unoccupied station outside of Caracas did get looted, for which Chavistas blamed radical elements of the opposition, since witnesses say that there were no protests at that station that night.

could default on debt payments, if oil production was not restarted soon. So far the restriction of oil supplies has had most of its impact on the lack of gasoline at many gas stations, especially in the country's interior, leading to long lines at gas stations throughout the country, due to consumer fears that their local gas station would soon run out of gasoline.

As of this writing (Dec. 16), the government claims that it has by and large managed to regain control over the oil production and shipping process, with the help of the military, so that oil supply should be back to normal within a few days. The opposition, however, denies this and warns that serious industrial accidents could result because unqualified personnel are taking control of the installations.

SUICIDE S

ECONOMICSUICIDE

It would seem that where the opposition's efforts to oust Chavez via a non-stop media campaign, large demonstrations, a coup, and four "general" strikes have largely failed, the management take-over, or coup, of the oil company might succeed.

Exactly one year after the opposition's first "general strike," on December 10, 2001, which launched the campaign to oust the democratically elected president of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, the opposition is engaged in its fourth "general strike" and has come very close to finally achieving its goal. The fourth employer-sponsored general strike, which began on December 2, seemed to have a strong start, as traffic resembled a Sunday and many stores and practically all private schools throughout the country were closed that day. However, by the second day it was clear that the strike would not last. Still, the opposition continued to extend the strike for an additional day every day, each time finding new reasons to continue the strike, even though it was clear that the strike had very little ongoing support beyond a few large businesses, such as McDonald's and other fast food chains, the supermarkets, and the private schools. The opposition, which consists of the main Chamber of Commerce Fedecameras, the union federa-

tion CTV, the coalition of opposition parties and organizations gathered under the "Coordinadora Democratica," and the private mass media kept claiming that the strike was a resounding success nonetheless.

The opposition's fortunes turned, however, when it pulled its trump card on the fourth day of the strike: the managers and administrative workers of Venezuela's oil company, PDVSA. Following a suspicious break-in at a manager's home and the government's raid of a tanker captain's home, managers and other white-collar workers of PDVSA staged a protest in front of the oil company's headquarters. The National Guard immediately broke-up this strike with tear gas and plastic bullets because the headquarters had several months earlier been declared a "security zone" and off limits to demonstrations, since it is of vital economic interest to the country. Despite PDVSA's president's continuous efforts to negotiate with dissident managers, these decided that it was time for them to join the strike, given the recent events. The management and white-collar worker strike, however, did not gain much momentum until tanker captains and dock workers joined it.

The opposition received an additional and tremendous boost when the opposition's leaders and the media took advantage of a terrible tragedy, in which a gunman opened fire on a peaceful opposition rally and killed three and wounded about 30 others. Opposition leaders immediately argued that the government was responsible for this atrocity. For the next two days the media continuously repeated the images of the chaos and confusion and of the dead and wounded that were recorded immediately after the shooting. The gunman was apprehended at the scene of the crime and within two hours of the shooting, amateur video footage surfaced that supposedly showed the gunman in the presence of pro-Chavez mayor Freddy Bernal a day earlier.

Investigators of the crime, however, have said that there is proof that the gunman, Joao de Gouveia, a Portuguese national, entered Venezuela from Portugal the day before the shooting, but well after the footage of the amateur video was taped. In other words, either the video image is not of de Gouveia or the video might have been faked, which would not have been too difficult, since the image is very grainy and dark because it was filmed in the middle of the night. Apparently, de Gouveia was living and working in Venezuela, but

Both the opposition and the government are keeping up their efforts to mobilize their supporters through large mobilizations. On December 7 the government organized a large demonstration at the presidential palace, which attracted several hundred thousand supporters, at which Chavez promised that just as he had defeated the opposition in the seven elections of 1998 to 2001, he would defeat them again in the current confrontation. The opposition, for its part, organized a massive demonstration of its own, also attracting hundreds of thousands of its supporters, on December 14th. These demonstrations proved, once again, that both the government and the opposition enjoy widespread popular support. Of course, the private media in Venezuela does not reflect this and covers only opposition demonstrations, leaving the impression to non-participating observers that only the opposition has popular support.

It would seem that where the opposition's efforts to oust Chavez via a non-stop media campaign, large demonstrations, a coup, and four "general" strikes have largely failed, the management take-over, or coup, of the oil company might succeed. The scenarios for doing so are still murky, though. Many among the more radical elements of the opposition, to which the main actors behind the "general strike" belong, such as Fedecameras President Carlos Fernandez, CTV President Carlos Ortega, and Caracas Mayor Alfredo Peña, seem to be hoping for another military coup attempt. These three continuously issue calls to the military to "abide by their mission," to "defend the constitution," and to avert Venezuela's "castro-communist dictatorship." The more moderate elements of the opposition, such as CTV general secretary Manuel Cova and NGO-leader Elias Santana of "Queremos Elegir," seem to be placing their bets on a negotiated settlement for early elections. However, the OAS-mediated negotiations have so far stalled and it is far from certain that they will reach any kind of agreement before Christmas. What is for sure, however, is that the opposition and a significant number of Venezuela's businesses prefer to commit economic suicide, in its efforts to oust Chavez, and to drag the country down with it.

Gregory Wilpert

Gregory Wilpert is a sociologist and freelance journalist living in Venezuela. He is currently working on a book on the Chavez presidency, which will be published by Zed Books in 2003.

It is suicide to be abroad. But what is it to be at home, Mr. Tyler, what is it to be at home? A lingering dissolution.

SAMUEL BECKETT

PEOPLE'S COLUMNIST

Carved in Stone

Vance Theoret is a married man and father of two boys. He is also of Mohawk, Italian and French decent. Our productive individual is certainly a winning example of how the ethnic stereotype can be eradicated while consistently working as an established soap stone carver and owner of Stone Bear Gallery in 100 Mile House, B.C.

The successful stone carver and businessman began his career 15 years ago when a lady friend of his wife was invited to the Theoret household and given the chance to demonstrate her skills in the art of stone carving.

At age 33, Vance was so inspired by the work of art, he enthusiastically pursued the challenge, borrowing two files and a chisel. He worked away in his hard determined effort, creating a bust of a pelican from Brazilian soap stone.

The pelican bust carving took 4 days to complete, Vance labouring 8 hours a day.

He decided to place the pelican bust carving on display for sale in a gift shop, where he once was employed as a waiter.

The work on display sold for \$95.00. He received 70% of the proceeds for his efforts and started to realize that his skills as a carver could hold a promising future.

He soon would develop other stone carvings of a variety of wilderness animals. The carvings ranged from weasels, loons, even to bears. Vance went to any extreme in selling his work. "I was knocking on any door that would open" he said, "obviously being very inexperienced at the time about the art business. I

didn't know where to look. So I mean anybody that would offer me the opportunity to show my work, I would take it. Then I got into the craft show circuit and sold my art work there."

Five years later, Vance established his own stone gallery. His family house having increased in value, he was encouraged to apply for a second mortgage. His bank manager approved his credit, giving him a loan to open up a stone gallery, 300 square feet for the price of \$25,000.

In 1990, Vance was the proud owner of the Stone Bear Gallery, located in 100 Mile House, B.C. It became a successful stone gallery where he sold his own stone carvings to the local market.

In 1997, Vance Theoret joined the Western Lights Artists Group. It is a group of 6 artists, who travel around Western Canada about 12 times a year, marketing their individual works at various major cities in Western Canada.

Recently, Vance Theoret participated in an art show presented by the Western Lights Artists Group held at Commerce Place in Edmonton. It took place from November 11th to 16th, 2002. Six artists displayed an array of wilderness and seascape paintings and stone carvings for market.

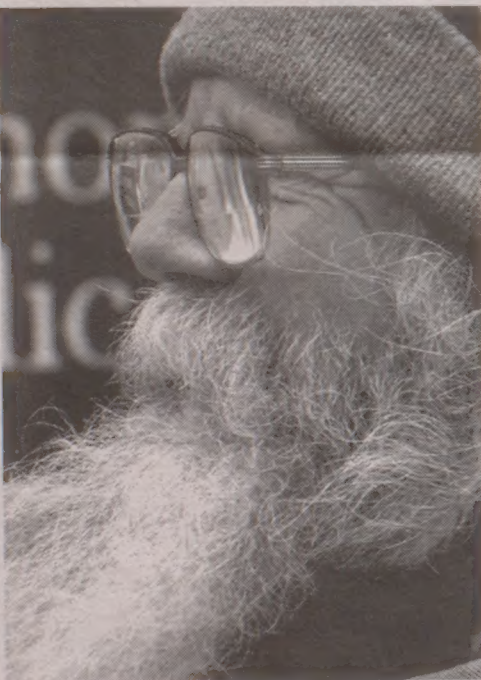
Vance carves as a way of connecting with the Creator while honouring the higher power for the talent he's been given. He says, "To be able to carve bears and other wildlife in a stone medium, I find very satisfying, very rewarding, not only financially, but I have to make a living, but creatively to make things with your own hands that the Creator gave you to work with, to honour Him is something special."

John Zapantis



Photo: John Zapantis

Vance Theoret and his carving at Commerce Place



I've finally moved out of the inner city. The carry on that was happening was taking a toll on my safety, peace and quiet time. When I moved in I was in early recovery from abusing substances. As of December 19, I have two years clean time.

My New Years wishes are:

1. That safe and affordable housing is built not only in Edmonton, but throughout the province.
2. STOP turning the demolished buildings (Hotels, Apartments, Houses) into parking lots, Bill Smith commented when the International Hotel was torn down - "great place for a parking lot."
3. To all the people I have had the pleasure of meeting through volunteering and Our Voice a healthy, happy New Year.

"God bless and don't have a meltdown, the community needs you."

4. That the chiropractor and acupuncture programs will be continuing at McCauley Health Clinic. Thanks to them and the students from Grant McEwan College who volunteer their time.

5. No privatization of Health Care.

6. To all non-profit agencies - carry on your excellent work being advocates for the less fortunate people in our society.

7. To all the professional counsellors and staff who have helped me out tremendously over the last four years:

God bless and don't have a melt down, the community needs you.

I'll be going down the trail of new discoveries and journey in the New Year, hopefully they will pan out, with God's willingness.

Is my kangaroo girl still out there?

Kevin Fox



Photo: John Zapantis

SON AND FATHER: Steve and Nick Kiliaris proudly display hot items.

My Big Fat Greek Appetite

They say, "Beware of Greeks Bearing Gifts!" when you walk into "Omonia Foods Import," a Greek market specializing in Greek foods located at 10605 - 101st Street. The old saying is just a myth as far as store owners, Nick Kiliaris and his brother-in-law Jim Fetokakis, are concerned. The bargain prices offered at this friendly store are a poor man's dream come true.

Just for starters, try walking over to the cooler at the back of this store and picking up a bubbly female orange drink called Orangina. Before you know it, this voluptuous babe of a drink can be swept off her feet for the feasible price of \$1.35 plus tax compared to other stores that sell her for twice that.

Jim Fetokakis showed me around the five-isle

store, boasting about his famous Calamata Extra Virgin Olive Oil that currently sells for \$15.95 for three litres. Jim says, "It's the best Olive Oil west of Greece."

The true heavyweight of Greek spaghetti is a real knockout named Melissa that retails for a \$1.50 for a 500-gram bag. Once you've added this tasty competitor to your taste buds, you'll know why she's a hot item and is favoured dearly by her customers.

If you're not in the mood for chasing down some of those tempting sweet delights, such as Orangina or Melissa, there's a Canadian tough rock called Peter Jackson's cigarettes that gives you the added kick needed when purchasing a pack for the affordable \$8.83 plus the GST.

As the old saying goes, "It's all Greek to me!" and for those who would like to come on down and see what reasonable deals are in store, Omonia's reputation is no myth by any means, just a wonderful reality for serious customers looking for hidden Greek treasures.

John Zapantis

EDMONTON

Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board

Call 496-5959



Call if you are a landlord or a tenant that needs:

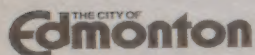
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Find information fast using The Landlord and Tenant Information Line 24 hours a day. Call 496-5959; press 2, then press 1 and follow the instructions.

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#3 Sir Winston Churchill Square
(Corner of 102A Avenue and 99 Street)
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Images
from the OV
Christmas Party

